



Dear Reader,

Happy Valentine's Day! Judging from the amount of feedback on the last issue, web writing remains a hot topic. This month's issue of **EC Buzz** deals with keeping web copy short and snappy.

On a personal note, what do you think about Valentine's Day? Is it a celebration of love and romance, or just a commercialized pseudo-holiday?

Looking forward to hearing from you!



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Three Simple Ways to Keep Web Copy Short

1. **Use active voice.** Sentences written in active voice are shorter than those written in passive voice. They also appear more concrete, energetic and interesting. *The dog bit the man* sounds exciting. *The man was bitten by the dog* is merely painful.
2. **Be sparing with the verb to be.** Try replacing constructions using the verb *to be* (including "being", "am", "is", "was", "were", etc.) with a stronger verb. Don't just *be wary of* weak and bloated sentences – *beware of them!* Instead of *being a reflection of* clumsiness, allow your words to *reflect* energy and precision!
3. **Cut the fluff.** Trim excess words that don't add value. Common culprits include "in fact", "as the case may be" and "indeed". Similarly, watch for empty clichés such as "to make a long story short" or "at the end of the day". If they merely make a short story longer and delay the end, cut them out. Finally, watch for redundancies. If a sentence merely restates a previous sentence in different words, delete one of them. You can always add emphasis to the remaining sentence.

Buzz Off : *Push the envelope*

"Push the envelope" has nothing to do with stationery – unless you're testing new paper airplane designs. It's an aviation term for taking an aircraft beyond its known limits of safety and performance. The expression was popularized in Tom Wolfe's best-selling 1979 novel *The Right Stuff* and in the film of the same name. From there it achieved mainstream status as a fresh way of saying "stretch the boundaries". But it now shows signs of fatigue through overuse, so you're likely to crash and burn with it.

Instead of "pushing the envelope", pull in one of these:

- "Innovate."
- "Try new ways of thinking."
- "Test the limits."

Which buzzword is your pet peeve? Send your suggestion to writer@ecwriting.com, then look for your buzzword and name in an upcoming issue.

Parting Words

"To write a good love letter, you ought to begin without knowing what you mean to say and to finish without knowing what you have written."

– Jean-Jacques Rousseau, philosopher